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CONTENTS.

No. XCVI.—NOVEMBER 1, 1869.

PART I.—ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

PAGE

ART. XII.—Lessons from Surgical Practice. By B. WILLS RICHARDSON, F.R.C.S.I.; Examiner in the Royal College of Surgeons, and Surgeon to the Adelaide Hospital, Dublin, ... 433

ART. XIII.—1. On the Cure of Phymosis by "Sudden Dilatation." 2. Observations on some points concerning the Reduction of Dislocations. By FRANCIS R. CRUISE, M.D.; One of the Surgeons of the Mater Misericordiæ Hospital, ... 482

ART. XIV.—On the Treatment and Cure of Varicocele by Suspension of the Testis. By Mr. MORGAN, F.R.C.S.I., Surgeon to Mercer's and the Westmoreland Lock Hospital; Professor of Descriptive and Surgical Anatomy, R.C.S.I., &c., ... 490

ART. XV.—Rare Form of Luxation of Acromial End of Clavicle, upwards and backwards. By PHILIP BEVAN, M.D., T.C.D., M.R.I.A., Fellow and Professor of Practical Anatomy, Royal College Surgeons; late Surgeon to Mercer's Hospital, ... 492

ART. XVI.—The Treatment of Club-foot by Direct Extension. By JOLLIFFE TUFNELL, Esq., F.R.C.S.I., M.R.I.A.; Surgeon to the City of Dublin Hospital; Examiner in Surgery, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, &c., &c., ... 496

ART. XVII.—Diffuse Hypertrophy of both Mammæ—Excision of One Organ—Favourable Result. By S. M. MACSWINEY, M.D., Physician to Jervis-street Hospital, ... 500

ART. XVIII.—Clinical Review of Cases under Treatment at the Westmoreland Lock Hospital, during the past Six Months. By JOHN MORGAN, F.R.C.S.I.; Surgeon to the Hospital; Professor of Surgical and Descriptive Anatomy, R.C.S.I.; and Surgeon to Mercer's Hospital, ... 506

PAGE

ART. XIX.—On the Recovery of Sight after Atrophy of the Optic Discs. By ROBERT P. OGLESBY, Assistant Demonstrator of Anatomy in the Leeds School of Medicine, ... 529

ART. XX.—On Essential Phthisis Bulbi. By H. ROSBOROUGH SWANZY, M.B., L.R.C.S.I.; Assistant at Prof. von Graefe's Ophthalmic Hospital, Berlin, ... 531

ART. XXI.—On the Cure of Uterine Epilepsy. By LAWSON TAIT, . 536

ART. XXII.—Probable Evidence as to the value of Pancreatic Emulsion of Fat in Tubercular Consumption. By RICHARD JOHN KINKEAD, A.B. and L.M., T.C.D.; F.R.C.S.I., &c., ... 539

PART II.—REVIEWS AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES.

1. Pathology of Tumours: Course of Lectures delivered at the University of Berlin. By R. VIRCHOW. Translated from the German by PAUL ARONSSOHN, Professor of the Faculty of Medicine, Strasbourg, ... 547

2. Recent Works on Chemistry:—
   - I. Notes on the Metals; being a Second Series of Chemical Notes for the Lecture Room. By THOMAS HOOD, Ph.D., 565
   - II. The Elements of Heat, and of Non-Metallic Chemistry. By FREDERICK GUTHRIE, B.A., Ph.D., ... 565
   - III. A History of Chemical Philosophy from the Age of Lavoisier to the present Time. By A. WURTZ; translated from the French by H. WATTS, ... 566
   - IV. Elements of Chemistry. By WILLIAM ALLEN MILLER, M.D. Part III., Organic Chemistry, ... 566
   - V. Exercises in Practical Chemistry. By A. G. VERNON HARCOURT, M.A., and H. G. MADAN, M.A., . . 566
   - VI. Chemistry; General, Medical, and Pharmaceutical. By JOHN ATTFIELD, Ph.D., F.C.S., ... 566

3. On Asthma; its Pathology and Treatment. By HENRY HYDE SALTER, M.D., F.R.S., &c., ... 572

4. Recent Works on Anatomy:—
   - I. Medical Anatomy. By FRANCIS SIBSON, M.D., &c., . 575
   - II. Gray's Anatomy, Descriptive and Surgical, with an Introduction on General Anatomy and Development. By T. HOLMES, M.A., ... 575
   - III. Human Osteology, comprising a Description of the Bones, with Delineations of the Attachments of the Muscles, the General and Microscopic Structure of Bone and its Development, &c. By LUTHER HOLDEN, F.R.C.S., &c., . . 575
   - IV. Practical Anatomy: A Manual of Dissections. By CHRISTOPHER HEATH, F.R.C.S., &c., ... 576

5. Treatise on the Diseases of the Ear, including the Anatomy of the Organ. By ANTON VON TROLTSCH, M.D., &c. Translated by D. B. St. John Roosa, ... 579

Part III.—QUARTERLY REPORTS.

PAGE

1. Report on Medicine. By James Cuming, M.A., M.D., &c., . 581
2. Report on Obstetric Medicine and Surgery. By George H. Kidd, M.D., F.R.C.S.I., &c., ... 595
3. Half-yearly Report on Public Health. By Charles A. Cameron, M.D., Ph.D., L.K. & Q.C.P.I., &c., ... 606

Part IV.—MEDICAL MISCELLANY.

Proceedings of the Pathological Society of Dublin:— PAGE

Dr. Barton on Necrosis of the Femur, . . . 644
Dr. M'Clintock on Deformity of the Hand after a Burn, . 645
Dr. Hayden on Fatal Hemoptysis, ... 645
Dr. Robert M'Donnell on Popliteal Aneurism, . . 646
Mr. Stokes on Ovarian Tumour, ... 649
Dr. Cryan on Cirrhosis of the Liver, ... 649
Dr. T. E. Little on Pericarditis, ... 651
Dr. William Moore on Aortic Aneurism, . . . 653
Dr. Porter on Vesical Calculus, ... 655
Dr Lyons on Gangrene of the Lung, ... 656
Dr. Lyons on Œdema of the Lungs, ... 657
Dr. Bennett on Atrophy of the Muscles from Disuse, . . 658
Dr. Hayden on Stricture of the Pharynx, . . . 660

Transactions of the Ulster Medical Society:—

Dr. W. Mac Cormac on Extirpation of one-half the Tongue, 663
Dr. J. W. Smith on Abscess of the Lung terminating in Pyemia, ... 666
Dr. J. W. Smith on Cerebral Meningitis, . . . 668

Translations:—

W. Koster on the Pathogeny of Apoplexy of the Medulla Spinalis. Translated from the "Nederlandsch Archief voor Genees en Naturkunde," by William Daniel Moore, M.D., &c., ... 669

i. Lachrymal Conjunctivitis and its influence on the Sight.

ii. Disorders of the Sight due to Affections of the Lachrymal Passages. Two Essays by Xavier Galezowski. Translated by C. E. Fitzgerald, M.B., &c., . . . 675

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

[It has been an invariable rule with us, carefully to exclude from this Journal any assertions which could lead to discussion, and, above all, to discussion in the least degree of a personal character. The expression used by Dr. Denham having, however, appeared in the Proceedings of the Obstetrical Society published in our last number, and Mr. Phelan having sought from us the right of vindicating his statistics, we feel it would be unjustifiable on our part to refuse him the opportunity. His reference to Dr. Sinclair's pamphlet we considered allowable, as, without doubt, it was generally considered Dr. Denham alluded to that paper when he spoke of Mr. Phelan's statistics having been proved worthless.—EDITOR, D. Q. J. M. S.]

In the proceedings of the Dublin Obstetric Society, reported in the last *Quarterly Journal of Medical Science*, Dr. Denham is stated to have said:—"The statistics of out-door lying-in patients I pronounce to be utterly worthless and unreliable. . . . The fact has been long patent to all who have paid any attention to the subject, and yet he (Dr. E. Kennedy) enters into the most elaborate calculations, occupying whole pages of figures, beginning with his own, and ending with those of his friend Mr. Phelan, whose calculations have been so unmercifully proved to be worse than useless, by their manifold errors, and palpable mistakes."

On reading these proceedings, I wrote Dr. Denham the subjoined letter,[a] and, in a few days, a duplicate of it; and, as neither has been acknowledged, I beg to trespass on your space, to show that Dr. Denham was not in the slightest degree justified in stating that any of the *data* that are given in my paper—that to which I suppose he alludes (published in the February Number, 1867, of the *Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medical Science*)—have been proved to contain manifold mistakes, or any mistakes.

I stated in that paper, on the authority of the English Registrar-General, that the mortality from metria in England and Wales, on the average of three years ended 1863, was 1 in 726 births, and from the accidents of childbirth, 1 in 306; that in

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[a] *Copy of Letter to Dr. Denham.*

"Shangana-terrace, Killiney,
"28*th August*, 1869.

"SIR,—I find it published in the last 'Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medical Science, page 274, that you mention Mr. Phelan, and state, 'whose calculations have been so unmercifully proved to be worse than useless, by their manifold errors and palpable mistakes.'

"Assuming that I am the person alluded to, and that my paper, 'On the Comparative Advantages of Obstetric Attendance on Poor Women in Lying-in Hospitals and in their own Homes,' published in the 'Quarterly Journal' for February, 1867, and my three letters on the same subject, published in 1868, in the 'Dublin Medical Press and Circular'—the only papers I ever wrote on the subject—are the documents which you state 'to have been worse than useless,' &c., I request you will inform me by whom such mistakes have been pointed out, and in what document, or documents, those errors and mistakes are to be found.

"I am, Sir,
"Your obedient servant,
"DENIS PHELAN.

Dr. Denham."

London it was 1 in 521 births from metria, and 1 in 429 from the accidents; that in 27 cities and towns it was 1 in 780 from metria, and 1 in 301 from the accidents. I gave the authority of the Registrar-General for Scotland that the mortality from metria, on the average of two years, 1861 and 1862, was 1 in 650 births; that from accidents of childbirth, 1 in 345; and that in seven of the most populous cities and towns, the mortality from both causes was 1 in 170 births. I stated, on the authority of the Irish Registrar-General, that in the Dublin registration district the mortality from metria was 1 in 221 births; from the accidents, 1 in 330; from both causes, 1 in 132½.

On the authority of Mr. Simon, the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, I gave returns from twelve lying-in and other hospitals, in which 87,544 women were confined, of whom 2,921, or 1 in 28⅔, died; and, on the same and other authorities, I quoted returns from six extern maternities, which showed that of 1,166,933 that were attended, 5,954, or 1 in 196, died. No one, that I am aware of, has attempted to show that any of these returns are erroneous.

In the autumn of 1867, Dr. Sinclair, King's Professor of Midwifery in the School of Physic in Trinity College, published a pamphlet entitled, "Extern Maternities and Lying-in Hospitals, some Observations on a Paper which appeared in the Eighty-fifth Number of the 'Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medical Science.'" The paper alluded to is that which is above described. The statements which I gave in it were based on official returns from lying-in hospitals and extern maternities, from the records of the Registrars-General of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and from the published works of eminent medical writers, whose names I quoted.

I have carefully examined Dr. Sinclair's pamphlet, and feel perfectly safe in asserting that the writer has not proved any one of the *data* that are given in that paper to be incorrect, and has not pointed out any *mistake* whatever, unless he counts that one in which he states that "30,594" is put down "30,954," no great mistake in such a multiplicity of figures as I found it necessary to give. It is true, Dr. Sinclair refers to errata in respect to figures in one of the reports of the Board of Superintendence of Dublin Hospitals, of which board I am the Secretary. These errata had been publicly acknowledged and explained, but Dr. Sinclair overlooked that explanation.

The real question at issue was, and is, that with which I commenced the paper alluded to:—"Whether, in large cities and towns, society is as much benefitted by affording obstetric attendance in lying-in or other hospitals, to such poor women as wish to be confined in them, as if it be afforded in their own residences; that is, in the residences of those who have a home in which they can be conveniently attended. Of course, for such exceptional cases as require careful medical watching or professional treatment, the hospital is necessary." This was my proposal, in support of which I gave such data as were within my reach, and, of course, on the general correctness and reliability of these data, it would depend to what weight they were entitled.

Dr. Sinclair observes (page 37):—"As to the comparison of their statistics (those of lying-in hospitals) with those of extern lying-in charities, it is out of the question; inasmuch as no statistics in connexion with the latter description of charity exist, upon which reliance could for a moment be placed."

This was written in 1867, but in April, 1868, Sir P. Dun's Hospital Maternity was commenced, under midwives and an assistant physician, "all controlled and directed by Dr. Sinclair." The first report of this extern maternity shows that in the year ended March, 1869, 336 lying-in women were attended by its staff; and of these two died. "Of these 336, 45 demanded more than ordinary care during actual labour, in consequence of delay, unnatural conditions, and complexities more or less serious. All these women made good recoveries. And it may be here mentioned that there has not occurred a single instance in which it was necessary to send a woman to hospital for illness, or delicacy, after delivery, during the year." Here we have it confirmed

by Dr. Sinclair himself, for, of course, the report was prepared under his direction, that 336 women were delivered at home with only two deaths.

After this proof of the possibility of a careful extern attendance, with a mortality of only 1 in 168, Dr. Sinclair will, perhaps, place more reliance on the reports of others in respect to similar institutions. With this document extant, and known to be accessible to the members of the Obstetric Society, one is surprised that Dr. Denham should state, "the statistics of out-door lying-in patients to be utterly worthless and unreliable."

DENIS PHELAN.

We have been obliged to hold over several Original Communications, Reviews, and Clinical Records.

Authors of Communications are requested to write the prescriptions in their papers in full, and in English.

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